

MAY 1975

- 1 -

SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON THE AUSTRIAN PROBLEM

1981

Summary

1. Propaganda on the prospects of an Austrian settlement has quadrupled Moscow's attention to Austrian affairs, normally less than that given any other European country except Switzerland and the Benelux. Previous increases had also been based on Soviet moves with respect to a treaty. The standard themes of the propaganda have been: (1) the danger of a new anschluss with Germany; (2) the folly of remilitarization under American sponsorship.
2. The current concessions on the treaty question contrast with Moscow's obscurantist tactics of the past. Since May 1953 the propaganda had been devoted first to obscuring Soviet recalcitrance and then to preparing for Molotov's use at Berlin of the anschluss issue to maintain the Soviet position. Molotov's February 1955 proposals were made without psychological preparation; the propaganda continued to stress the factors of anschluss and remilitarization which had always made a treaty impossible. As late as 5 January the stalemate on the German question was said to "indefinitely postpone" any Austrian settlement.
3. Current broadcasts cite the Moscow talks on Austria to show that negotiations on international problems can be successful provided interested parties demonstrate good will. With respect to negotiations on Germany, however, it is implied that Germany must first renounce military alliances.
4. The concept of neutrality, generally avoided in Soviet propaganda, has not been applied to Austria in any Soviet note, government statement or elite speech. Radio propaganda on the current negotiations uses it occasionally, but more often refers to Austrian "independence." Proposed Austrian policy is likened to the neutralist tradition of Switzerland, which however has been described in the past as "hypocritical."

DOCUMENT NO. \_\_\_\_\_

NO CHANGE IN CLASS. 1

X DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C

NEXT REVIEW DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

AUTH: HR 70-2

DATE: June 81 REVIEWER: 018557

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

## SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON THE AUSTRIAN PROBLEM

### 1. Austria's Significance in Soviet Propaganda

Radio Moscow devotes less attention to Austria than to any other country in Europe except the Benelux nations and Switzerland. Austria is normally the subject of approximately one-sixth as many commentaries as Germany or Korea, and of fewer even than Italy, France, or the United Kingdom. Emphasis during the past two months on the prospects of an Austrian settlement has quadrupled this volume in the highest sustained attention to Austrian affairs in the past five years; discussion of the Austrian treaty at the Berlin conference produced a slightly greater weekly volume, but only of two weeks' duration.

The propaganda has regularly been concentrated on two well-defined themes: (1) the danger to Austria of a new anschluss with West Germany; and (2) the folly of a policy of remilitarization under American sponsorship. Moscow's recognition of the psychological importance of the treaty issue is illustrated in the fact that every sharp increase in attention to Austria in the past five years has been based on a Soviet note or authoritative article in PRAVDA or IZVESTIA on the subject of a treaty.

### 2. Development of Austrian Treaty Issue

The current Soviet concessions with respect to the Austrian treaty depart abruptly from the obscurantist tactics evident in propaganda on the question in the past few years. Since the West reopened the treaty issue in May 1953 Soviet propaganda has gone through two phases, the first designed to disguise the Soviet refusal to negotiate and the second intended to prepare the position Molotov was to take at Berlin. Ignoring the Western accession in August 1953 to Soviet demands for abandonment of the abridged treaty draft, the propaganda as late as the Berlin conference continued to condemn the Western position on the basis of the short treaty. Even at Berlin Molotov spent some time pointing out how the short treaty draft violated Austrian democratic rights and Soviet economic interests before acknowledging vaguely that "we understand" the treaty to have been abandoned. The poverty of the Soviet propaganda position is reflected in the charge (quoting BERLINER ZEITUNG) during the summer of 1953 that the United States and Austria were planning a separate treaty which would enable U.S. troops to remain in Austria as training cadres under the guise of security troops. The single conciliatory gesture of the period, the Soviet note in July 1953 acceding to Austria's request that the USSR assume costs of occupation, was briefly exploited in subsequent comment.

In the period preceding the Berlin conference there was a sharp increase in attention to the danger of anschluss, presumably to substantiate Molotov's demands at the conference for a ban on Austrian participation in military alliances and retention of occupation troops in Austria pending conclusion of a German peace treaty. Austria was depicted as partner rather than victim in the plans for a new anschluss; the prospect of annexation was seen in Austrian participation in the Council of Europe and the Schuman Plan, in association of the Austrian Independent splinter group VdU with the West German FDP group, and in the combined activities of the West German and Austrian Alpine clubs. Penetration of West German capital into Austrian industry was described as the preliminary step to extensive "political and ideological expansion."

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

There was no change in the Soviet propaganda position on Austria between the Berlin conference and the new proposals of Molotov's 8 February Supreme Soviet speech. The proposals were thus made without benefit of prior propaganda preparation; in fact, a broadcast commentary of 5 January said that the "absence of chance" for settlement of the German problem "indefinitely postpones" an Austrian settlement.

Moreover, propaganda during late 1954 and early 1955 almost to the eve of the Molotov-Bischoff talks stressed precisely the factors of anschluss and remilitarization emphasized in the period prior to the Berlin conference. Adenauer was accused on 21 January of broaching "real possibilities of economic, political and military anschluss," and "militarist and pan-Germanic activity" were said to be increasing. Soviet High Commissioner Ilyichev, protesting in December against stationing U.S. troops in the Tyrol region, charged that they constituted unwarranted remilitarization of Western Austria, and this charge was repeated in subsequent propaganda prior to Molotov's Supreme Soviet speech.

Thus Molotov took his stand for expediting an Austrian settlement while Soviet propagandists were insisting that the same situation existed which had precluded settlement at Berlin. Some effort to explain the inconsistency was made in a Russian Hour broadcast (9 March), on the Vienna radio which said the current Soviet position "allows for the argument that the danger of anschluss does not threaten from within Austria." With respect to the interdependency of the German and Austrian questions, the new Soviet proposals were first explained as permitting separate negotiations on the two questions, even though the future of both countries must be considered in any kind of settlement; but Soviet comment *currently implies* that while solution of the Austrian question at one time depended on solution of the German question, the positions have become reversed and West Germans should heed the lesson of the Moscow talks on Austria.

Soviet propaganda to date insists that failure to conclude an Austrian treaty over the years has been the result solely of Western intransigence and obstructionism, and propagandists exploit the current Soviet initiative for a quick settlement. Although Molotov at Berlin made some slight concessions regarding Soviet economic interests in Austria and agreed to meet Western terms "half-way" by stipulating that further discussions on troop withdrawal should take place not later than 1955, current comment asserts that the Soviets are meeting the West "half-way" without recalling the Berlin concessions.

### 3. Implications for Other International Issues

Current propaganda stresses the Moscow talks on an Austrian treaty as demonstrating that negotiations on international problems can be successful provided all parties show good will. However, broadcasts completely avoid the assertion that there is no disputed question which cannot be solved by negotiations. Introduced by Malenkov in March 1953, this thesis has apparently not been repeated by any Soviet leader since Molotov used it in his closing address to the Geneva conference last July. The Soviet Foreign Ministry statement on the Geneva conference added the qualifying prerequisite of good will; Malenkov's April 1954 Supreme Soviet speech added a similar condition; Saburov's 1954 October Revolution speech referred merely to the "known position of the Soviet Government on the possibility and necessity of solving controversial questions through negotiations"; Khrushchev's speech in Warsaw on 20 April 1955 cited the Moscow talks as

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

proof that with "good will and good relations on both sides one must and can settle international problems peacefully"; and Zhukov said on May Day that the "whole of progressive mankind warmly approves the foreign policy of the Soviet Government which is aimed at solving controversial international questions by peaceful means."

With respect to the German question, however, the possibility of negotiations is qualified by the implicit proviso that Germany renounce military alliances. Even this position constitutes a propaganda concession, since Soviet comment for five months prior to French ratification of the Paris agreements said negotiations on Germany would become impossible after ratification. After the French ratification action, such categorical statements were avoided in gradual transition to the present less intransigent position.

#### 4. "Neutrality" for Austria

The subject of Austrian neutrality was introduced into Soviet propaganda by a radio commentator in October 1953; since that time it has never been mentioned specifically in any Soviet note, government statement or elite speech, and seldom in any broadcast comment. Current discussions of the Austrian settlement occasionally use the term neutrality but refer more often to Austrian "independence." A few commentaries compare projected Austrian policy with the neutralist tradition of Switzerland, even though Swiss neutrality has been described in Soviet propaganda as "hypocritical" (1950) and the non-neutrality of Swiss official tolerance of U.S. military training maneuvers in the country has been pointed out (1952).

This reluctance to speak of neutrality as the desideratum for Austria falls into line with consistent Soviet avoidance of the neutrality concept and in particular with the treatment of the term as applied to Germany. Although Molotov at the Berlin conference referred to neutralization of Germany as a goal of the Soviet collective security program—two months after Ulbricht had denied that the Soviet aim was neutralization—current propaganda tends to attribute the notion of neutrality to Western sources. An Ulbricht article in NEUES DEUTSCHLAND (23 April) quotes the "SPD paper" in West Berlin that the East-West power blocs "should be separated by a broad belt of neutral states" and that conclusion of an Austrian treaty would leave "only a reunited Germany still missing in the chain of states" separating the two blocs. In a rare reference to Western press speculation that the USSR envisages a neutral belt across Europe, TASS (17 April) quotes a UP report that some officials view the Austrian-Soviet agreement as a means by which the USSR hopes to create such a belt. TASS's report (25 April) of Finnish Premier Kekkonen's statement to the West German paper DIE WELT that international politics are now "in a phase of development in which there are possibilities for real neutrality" is used in Norwegian- and German-language broadcasts.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~